



# LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION PARTNERSHIP

ADVANCING JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

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Date: February 9, 2021

Re: HB 120 - Maryland Public Information Act (Anton's Law)

Position: SUPPORT

To: The Maryland House Judiciary Committee

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. As a retired Captain of the Montgomery County Police Department and a speaker for LEAP, I am here to support HB 120. I believe that transparency of police misconduct records is critical to community trust in law enforcement.

In addition to my public safety career, I am a speaker and executive board member for the Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP). LEAP is a nonprofit group of police, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice professionals who speak from firsthand experience. Our mission is to make communities safer by focusing law enforcement resources on the greatest threats to public safety and working toward healing police-community relations.

During my 28 years of service in the Montgomery County Police Department, in addition to being a Deputy Director of the Internal Affairs Division, I was an Administrative Lieutenant for the Office of the Chief of Police, an investigative sergeant, a call taker for the police 911 dispatch center, and a supervisor for the school resource officer program. Throughout my career I learned valuable lessons in building community trust by upholding transparency and respect both within and outside of the department.

Police-community trust is essential to public safety. We rely on our relationships with the public every time we try to convince a witness to speak up or a victim to report a crime. When the public refuses to report crimes or come forward with key information, we simply cannot protect community safety.

**LawEnforcementActionPartnership.org**

*Formerly known as Law Enforcement Against Prohibition*

I urge you to support HB 120, which would make police disciplinary records subject to our Public Information Act. Hiding information on the misconduct of a few officers makes the public suspicious of all officers. The vast majority of officers protect and serve each day without abusing their power -- and those officers have no reason to worry about HB 120. In fact, HB 120 would make law enforcement more effective by allowing officers to build better rapport with the communities we serve.

Other states have demonstrated that we can have police transparency without sacrificing public safety. In states from Ohio to Florida and Utah, police misconduct records are publicly accessible under their public information statutes. The sky will not fall if Maryland follows them down this sensible path.

In sum, I believe that HB 120 is a critical piece in strengthening police relationships with our communities. We must stop hiding misconduct information in order to start down the road to better cooperation with the communities we are sworn to protect and serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience in support of this bill.

Respectfully,

Captain Sonia Pruitt (Ret.)

Montgomery County Police Department

Speaker and Executive Board Member, Law Enforcement Action Partnership